

URL: <http://bastcastle.org/html/fanficad/gauntlet.htm>

Title: "The Gauntlet"

Author: Justine Tyler (Vader_Lichtekooi@yahoo.com)

Rating: NC-17

Characters: Anakin (after becoming Darth Vader, but before Mustafar), Padme

Category: Angst, seduction.

Summary: What I envision as possibly happening in "Revenge of the Sith" when Anakin went to see Padmé at her apartment, in the hours between the youngling slaughter at the Jedi Temple and the Separatist leadership slaughter on Mustafar. Just your basic, well on the way to the Dark Side mid-slaughter erotica, for lack of a better description.

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Warnings: Rough sex, sex while pregnant.

You let me violate you.

You let me desecrate you.

You let me penetrate you.

You let me complicate you.

-T. Reznor

***** Part 1 *****

"Say it," he breathed into her ear.

She could feel rivulets of sweat falling from his face to her bare shoulder. Occasionally, he would nudge his head even further into her to slowly lick the salty droplets from her delicious nakedness.

For reasons she couldn't even begin to comprehend, she felt the bittersweet kiss of arousal swirling around her like a harvest season fog - and she was terrified. He had returned here, to ask her to wait for him, to tell her that everything would be different soon, that everything would be alright. When he had kissed her goodbye, she felt him guiding her inside the apartment toward the center courtyard. She still loved him, but something inside of him had changed in the short hours since she had last seen him. Something evil had happened. She could see it in his eyes, and she could taste it on his lips. It was something dark and monstrous, and the taste was vile and bitter. She felt hopelessly lost in her attempt to rationalize the irreconcilable.

She didn't know how long she had been like this, standing and unable to move. For what had seemed like hours, she was pinned by his warm body against the rough mortar wall in a shadowy corner of the courtyard. Her arms were trapped behind her back, the wall and the weight of her own body holding them prisoner.

He was wearing soft trousers and a loose, long sleeved tunic that was open down the front, the sash long since removed. His dark, hooded robe had been dropped carelessly on the ground as

soon as he had placed her against the wall, and it remained in a seemingly endless pile near her feet.

It became quickly apparent to her that his intention was to have her, to take possession of her from the inside out, this one last time. She had no special senses as he did, but with only a woman's intuition she knew that this would be the last time he held her in his arms. She was sickened by the fact that this would be her last memory of him.

She had fought him, with every shred of strength she had to call upon. She no longer had the energy to mount a physical defense against him, and her usually iron-clad will was weakening. He was winning, and she hated him all the more for it. What contradiction, to feel such abhorrence for the man she loved so completely.

Her gown, just a simple frock really, was of an off the shoulder design. The fabric was blue like the depths of a frigid lake, sheer and silken, and dusted with flecks of gold. She had worn this gown today at his request, because he told her that he could see shimmers of that very same gold in her eyes when she did. He sounded like a boy with a schoolyard crush when he had said this the first time, and she had found that charming. She heeded him, hesitantly and always, wearing the dress only on special occasions. She did not know why she chose to wear it on this day.

"Say it," he hissed, his chin resting on her shoulder. As if to emphasize that this was not his first utterance of the command, he placed his hand, sweaty and warm, on the front of her neck encircling the base of her throat. She reacted by pulling her head up, straight and proud, only to realize that she had accomplished nothing more than to grant him easier access. He lifted his chin from her shoulder, and was now looking into her eyes. His own blue steel eyes were as burning embers, a triumphant combination of lust and power.

He tilted his head slightly to one side as his eyes remained riveted to hers. She was unnerved by this, as his look reminded her of a drosalith serpent carefully examining its prey just prior to devouring it. She inhaled sharply, and in response he tightened his grip on her neck. He adjusted his hand slightly, his index and middle fingers coming to rest on the artery that fed her brain with blood, and exerted the slightest amount of pressure on this tender spot. He is feeling my pulse, she thought with revulsion. With her knees buckling and her head light, she became filled with alarm and dread at the frightening picture that this simple action painted in her mind.

Her hair was wet and matted from nervous sweat, and as his hand slithered past her shoulder to grasp the back of her neck, he entwined the fine hair of her neckline through his fingers. He moved his hand slowly and sensuously, stroking the ticklish skin below her hairline, playing with the delicate hairs. Her eyes fluttered closed, and he could sense her anxiety retreating. Only he had discovered this secret spot, and he now used it to his advantage. Her entire body sighed, releasing the fear that had been stored in her every cell.

She smelled of sex.

He sought and found a firm grip on her precious neck, and pressed his body against hers, much harder than before. She was yanked rudely from her brief respite, worrying that the power of his chest alone would be enough to crush her. She felt his hips undulate against her, and she recoiled at the feeling of his hardness pressing against her swollen, pregnant belly.

His breathing became erratic and labored, and without warning, he cruelly licked her face. The long, hard pressing of his flattened tongue against her soft cheek left a wet trail from her chin to her brow. He grunted low in his throat, the muffled and guttural sound of an animal driven only by instinct. She blanched at the rawness of his profane kiss, and at his obvious enjoyment of it. She cursed as well her own desire, the evidence of which now clung to her inner thighs.

Into her ear again he commanded, his harsh whisper slow and distinct.

"Say. It."

His command was punctuated as he raised his hands with unnatural speed and assaulted the unsuspecting neckline of her gown. Tearing the delicate fabric to just beneath her breasts, he parted the material to expose their fullness to his waiting, wanton eyes. With his palms pressing her shoulders to the unyielding wall, he lowered his velvet mouth to tease her nipples. They responded blissfully to his tongue, his teeth, that remarkable instrument that was his mouth. A hushed moan of pleasure rebelliously escaped her lips.

As before, she melted into a lavish place of pleasure and sensation. As before, he denied her permission to remain there for longer than a heartbeat. He bit down on one nipple, hard enough to break the skin and draw first blood. Startled, she yelped in pain, and a heavy tear landed on her cheek.

He thought she had never looked more beautiful.

All of his senses were now heightened, in this primal and compelling place his mind had created. Smelling her blood, his very core exploded with a ferocious need to taste her, taste all of her. He lowered his head to her full breast once again, pausing a moment to admire how the bright red blood contrasted with her glorious white skin. He noticed also the thickened, bluish veins that often appear on the breast when a woman is near to giving birth. He licked a stripe of blood from her breast, leaving its delightful stickiness on his tongue for a long moment, savoring the rich coppery flavor. Her tears came in earnest now, and fell from her eyes like a dismal grey midwinter's rain, joining with the blood still trickling down her breast.

An ecstasy that was nearly overpowering enveloped his body as an idea took shape in his mind. Placing his soft, warm mouth over her breast, the nipple well placed on his tongue, he began to suck. He encircled her breast with one of his hands, coaxing along the reward that he knew awaited him. Salt from her blood and tears, mixing with the warmth of her newborn foremilk, sent his mind, and his senses, and his body reeling. The taste was exquisite, the act carnal, and the taboo was in itself an extremely powerful intoxicant. Against her belly, through the blur of reality that surrounded and permeated her, she felt his cock react as he drank of her, pulsing against her with each greedy gulp. With this final incivility he had broken her, and on her face was a wretched look of humiliating surrender.

Hopeless sobs racked her body, keeping her immobile despite her sudden physical freedom. He stood back to face her. She turned away from him, repulsed by the sight of her precious fluids dripping down his chin. His breathing, coming in audible gasps, was thick and indecent.

Seeing and sensing her disgust, he smiled lasciviously, and wiped his mouth and chin with the back of his left, still human hand. He reached for her face, now in profile to him, with his right.

His non-human hand was part of an arm made of metals and circuits and neural connectors. He kept his arm and hand hidden from view, with long sleeves and the ever present black leather glove, to protect the squeamish and the ignorant. He normally wore gloves on both hands, to draw less attention to the one that actually needed it. Even when he was alone with her - during day to day life as well as during private moments - he kept his mechanical arm and hand covered. Only while sleeping did he keep it exposed, taking care to cover it again should she hear him stir. He kept the arm concealed, not because he was embarrassed or uncomfortable, but as a constant reminder to himself of the potential danger of its inhuman strength. Coupled with his unpredictable temper, it was a formidable weapon.

He caressed her cheek gently with his gloved hand, softly and with enough care and warmth that she turned back to face him. Somewhere beyond his madness was a gentleness and a pure passion, visible in the depths of his blue eyes. He stepped back from her, and for the first time in hours she was able to see all of him.

The trousers he wore were now slung low and seductively below his hips. His continued excitement was visible through the gauzy material, and she could just discern the outline of his well developed legs. The open tunic he wore was cascading off his shoulders in such a way to give the appearance that he was very broad, muscular, and strong - and yet somehow achingly vulnerable. The muscles of his chest and stomach were tanned and taught. The open tunic and the low-riding trousers afforded her an uncompromised view of the enticing "v" form classically defined by a well-built man's torso and hips.

His wavy hair, light golden brown and streaked by the sun, was tousled about his shoulders, sweat dripping from the curly ends. His face, permanently tanned from the decade spent on an unforgiving desert world, was tilted back in an attempt to capture a fragment of the early evening breeze. He ran a rough, weatherworn hand through his hair, and once again his eyes engaged hers.

Those eyes, as black-azure blue as the river l'Nelhmne.

Those eyes, that could steal from her very soul the most worthy love ever known.

Those damnable eyes, that she knew would inevitably have her pleading for her own life, and for his immortal soul.

"Say it."

He was relentless, but he had underestimated her resolve. She said nothing. Yes, she knew perfectly well what it was he wanted to hear, but she feared for her own soul should she capitulate to his will and let the words escape her lips.

He turned his gaze to the ground in a disgusted manner, his hands on his hips. The thrill of a small victory welled up inside of her, and she felt as if she had gained some ground in this battle. Her face subtly reflected her perceived advantage, as she allowed the shadow of a smirk to touch her lips. Much to her horror, he saw the look upon her face, yet to her surprise he did not come at her as she momentarily feared. She was still there, which in his estimation meant that he was already the victor.

Taking a deep breath and a bold step forward, he removed the leather glove from his right hand in a single swift motion, throwing it forcefully to the ground. The silvery gold ore, of which the

outer casing of the mechanical arm was manufactured, eerily reflected the moons' light. With a deliberate shrug, his shirt floated gently to the ground to rest at her feet. Seeing him exactly as he was, for the first time - whole, and yet a man in pieces - took her very breath away. Gods, how heartbreakingly beautiful he was. Yet somehow, in a way she could neither reconcile nor express, his having such a soulless thing as part of himself was somehow appropriate.

He held the mechanized arm up and turned it slowly around, deliberately clenching and unclenching its - his - fist, as if scrutinizing it for the very first time. From her vantage point, she observed that the arm contained plates of delicate and painstakingly curved metal, obviously constructed to emulate where a muscle would bulge here, and where tendons would cross beneath flesh there. The wires and framework that lay beneath the plates were discreetly hidden, revealing themselves only briefly when he would flex his arm, or when he turned his wrist in just a certain way.

The hand - his hand - was shaped exactly like the hand of a human skeleton, with every joint of every digit cleverly connected to its neighbor, complete with knuckles. The authentically sculpted metallic bones of the hand and fingers even matched the dimensions of his own living flesh and bone hand precisely. Deceptively fragile looking tensile wires did the complex work of living tendons. The casing of the replacement hand and arm was of exotic golden and silver metals, as beautiful and lustrous as any fine piece of jewelry she had ever owned or seen.

She did not know how the prosthetic arm was connected to his living flesh; she was not sure that she even wanted to know. Neither could she fathom why he had chosen this particular moment to completely share himself with her. She honestly didn't know whether to be supremely honored, or genuinely frightened. From the start, and in the end, dichotomy reigned as the one consistent and defining quality of both his behavior, and their relationship.

Her breath caught sharply in her throat as he began to take the step that would close the distance between them once again. The look on his face sincerely terrified her. His eyes were dark.....so very dark.....and his tightly knit brow bestowed on him an almost primitive quality. His mouth was twisted into a callous smile, and he appeared to be consumed by something sinister - something existing midway between loathing and lust. She was well aware of the object of his lust, but what was the focus of his loathing? Her? She could not entertain that possibility, not for an instant. Himself? That conclusion was far more logical, far more conceivable.

She didn't know what had happened to him in the hours just prior to his return, but whatever it was, the effect it was having on him made her fearful and panic-stricken, Adrenaline being a powerful motivator, she now had her wits about her for the first time since this hideous charade began. With clarity of mind, she decided to flee.

Even before the synapses of her brain were able to complete the message of escape to her muscles, he had sensed her decision. By moving a forearm into position with lightening speed across her throat, he effectively trapped her, once again, against the courtyard wall. He pressed against her with such force that it effectively knocked the wind out of her, and she could feel the uncaring roughness of the hard mortar wall behind her gouging into the soft flesh of her back. Despite the pain, she stood motionless, unable to move, to speak, or to breathe. He peered unwaveringly into her eyes, and she felt the burden of finality that her fight was irrevocably lost. The fight for her life, the battle for his soul. It may not end here, in this place, tonight - but it will end soon. This she knew with a haunted certainty.

In defeat her breathing resumed, adopting the heavy syncopated rhythm of her captor's respiration.

"Say it," he intoned angrily.

Replying for the first time to his question, she whispered. "I.....I cannot."

"You cannot - or you will not?" he growled menacingly through clenched teeth.

She did not have a reply for him, simply because she honestly didn't know the answer to the question. Her head drooped to her chest, heavy with fatigue, and guilt, and grief. Quietly she began to cry: a sorrowful, pitiable cry. It was to her utter shock and amazement - and deniably to her pleasure - that she felt the weight of her saddened chin being lifted, gently and lovingly, by cold metallic fingers.

***** Part 2 *****

Help me, I've got no soul to sell.
-T. Reznor

Hesitantly, she looked up. He was smiling at her, an adoring, genuine smile that any normal man would give to the woman he loved more than anything. Confusion coursed through her veins, rapid and hot like a lethal poison. She couldn't tolerate this another moment of this, this duality of character.

"Who ARE you?" she cried. "I don't know who you are!"

He pressed a metallic finger to her lips, shushing her softly with his. Her tears began to flow anew. He pulled his finger downward, brushing it over her trembling bottom lip. As the finger - his finger - traveled down her perfect chin to her neck, her eyes flickered and closed, and without thought she tilted her head back in response to his touch.

He traced the outline of her collarbone with his fingers, taking perverse pleasure in the fact that she could feel it, and he could not. He began to stroke her hair with his still human hand, and with his cold, lifeless hand he lifted the weight of a warm, heavy breast. She gasped and shuddered, all remnants of fear taking leave of her body and mind.

His hand didn't remain long at her breast, long enough only to see the nipple pout with arousal. He moved his hand to her side, reaching with his long fingers to tease the curve of her back with slow, delicious, swirling tickles, until his hand came to rest upon her hip. Her hips were round, and well apart. Such women, he recalled from legend, bear sons.

Her eyes were closed and her breaths came in sensual, audible bursts. He put his face close to hers, so she could feel the longing whispers of his own breathing. He pressed his lips to hers, and she collapsed into him. She moaned softly, and her tongue searched hungrily for his. In response to her quest, he methodically traced the outline of her lips with his tongue, always dodging hers when it emerged to greet him. Her entire body quivered as his pliant wet mouth finally enveloped hers.

His hand, mechanical and without sensation, slid down from her hip to rest upon her inner thigh, the chilly metallic fingers digging into her warm, supple flesh. Without thought, she parted her legs at his touch. Her breathing was shallow, hard, and sharp, and her entire body shone with a fine layer of sweat. Her involuntary gesture of welcome did not go unrewarded, as he moved his hand to lightly cover her glistening sex.

"Please.....please.....please....." she breathed heavily.

"Please? Please what, m'Lady?" he whispered into her ear, with just a hint of sarcasm.

The sensual sound of his voice, and his use of the courtly title that he often used to tease her sent her senses into an uncontrollable, frenzied dance.

"Please," she breathed huskily, "Please...please....touch...me."

Although her eyes had been closed for some time now, she knew that he was smiling as she said this. The thought of his smile, and of his touch, made her shiver despite the warmth of the evening. Without a word, he more firmly pressed his hand against her fleshy mound, and slid a cold, hard finger deep inside of her. Her body tensed, and she stopped breathing as if it were no longer a necessity. He ground his pelvis against her, slowly and methodically, allowing her to feel the heat and hardness of his cock against her body. Pressing his mouth against her ear, he breathed heavily to the rhythm of his own passion. The thought breezed through her mind that she could be completely satisfied just by losing herself in the sounds he made.

He continued to penetrate her with a shiny, slippery finger, thrusting deep into her well and back out again. Her body heaved with each thrust, and her belly hardened into a tight knot as orgasm approached her womb.

"You will say it," he commanded with a seductive hiss.

She tossed her head from side to side in reply. With his metal finger still buried inside of her, his human hand grabbed her hair at the nape of her neck, and jerked her head back sharply.

"Look at me! Open your eyes!" he shouted. Complying, she slowly opened her eyes, and found herself looking into his eyes, so close that she could see the dark blue outline of his irises. He looked....evil. Hard as she tried, she simply couldn't find a better word. But also in his eyes, she noticed, were tears.....

He abruptly removed his finger from her warm body, and placed the hand on her face, cupping a reddened cheek. His other hand, the living one with physical sensation, released its grip on her hair, and began to weave dark and dampened tendrils through its fingers. The look on his face, in his eyes, still had her convinced that she was merely the prey to be devoured by the predator.

"Where are you? What has happened to you? I love you!" she screamed in agony.

Suddenly, she was enveloped and overwhelmed by a fiery burst of compassion - pity - toward him. She knew well of the painful mistake he had once made for the sake of another he had loved, a mistake that had cost many innocent lives. Although it was years ago, he still wore the anguish of that experience like an unhealed brand upon his heart. She had to wonder what had

prompted this freshly raw, reckless, and unpredictable behavior in him. She believed that he loved her, of that she had no doubt. Possibly, she thought, he loved her too much.

A grotesque thought took form in her tired mind. He's done something, again. She knew it, as sure as she knew the suns would rise in the morning. He'd done.....something. Something horrible, something too grisly to contemplate. She knew it in her soul, and she knew it in her gut. And she knew - and mourned - that he had believed with his very soul that he'd done it for her.

"Do not.....ask....me....please. Do not." he gasped in harsh breaths, tears, anger, and bitterness welling in the corners of his eyes, But there was something else there too, in his eyes. Something she did not want to acknowledge.

As she looked at his face - truly looked at him, for the first time in a very long time - she saw only..... pain. Pain that encircled him, embraced him, and permeated him. Pain that lived in his heart, and pain that flowed from his every pore. Gods, she screamed from the tortured depths of her soul, and from the blessed depths of her love: he is truly and utterly lost and alone - and there is nothing, nothing I can do to help him.

I have lost him, she thought. I love him, she cried inwardly, I've loved him from the first day I met him when he was just a little boy. But I do not deserve him, she despaired, hating herself for the thought - because I do not have the courage or the strength to save him. The words echoed in her mind, and clung to her flesh like a contagion invading her without mercy. If it were literally possible to die of a broken heart, she had just chosen her path.

She recoiled as he breathed into her mouth, looking through her soul with those eyes. Those eyes. Those eyes that couldn't lie to her, even when his words could. With her heart shattering into fragments not worth saving, she knew that her darkest thoughts were true - much truer than she had been able to admit, even to herself. Her realization flooded her mind with unimaginable horror, horror she was forced to embrace. He had done something, she knew. Something terrible, something unspeakable. He believed he had done it for her.

And she knew that he had enjoyed it.

His hands slid slowly down the silhouette of her body - slowly and sadly, savoring every touch and committing to memory her every curve, her every perfection, her every exquisite flaw. Down the outline of her body, her warm and so very much alive body. For the last time. Though her thoughts were unspoken and unrevealed, he knew them nonetheless - intimately - as if they were his very own. He possessed that power. He was possessed by that curse. The end, he thought, comes far too swiftly. No time to adjust, no time to push away the pain. No time. He clenched his teeth, closing his eyes tightly to contain his tears, as the last thought her mind sent to him willingly was that he was but a stranger to her, a stranger to be feared, to be discarded, and to be pushed away.

"Say it." It was less than a plea, but much more than a question.

He was damned, consumed by pain, by rejection, by rage. He turned her by a shoulder, sharply and without mercy, to face the wall that had been behind her these last hours. A fair and delicate cheek was roughly scraped by the jagged mortar, blood winding a path from the wound to her neck. She kept her eyes tightly closed, fiercely hoping like a child that if she could not see she was invisible, and this wasn't really happening.

He pressed against her, his cock raging and protesting against the firm flesh of her bottom. He breathed into her ear, with that sound she could not resist, pressing his hardness into her, tempting her, taunting her. All rational thought left her, and she arched her back, pressing her firm ass forcefully into his groin, meeting his stiffness. Tears poured from her eyes, as she knew that this would be the last meeting of what was left of their love, the last melding of their flesh. This inexplicably gave her strength and resolve. She reached behind herself, taking his straining cock in her hands, and guided it toward her aching cunt. If this was to be the remainder of what they were, of what they had been to each other, she was going to make sure by the gods that she extracted everything from it that she was - that they were - due.

She pressed the swollen head of his cock into her opening, teasing it with the sticky wetness waiting there for him. No further urging was necessary, as he thrust upward to bury himself inside of her warmth. He breathed lovely promises of undying love into her ear as he punished her body, and he exhaled sorrow for those things he knew he could not change. She didn't have a special sense, but she knew. He knew. She was right. Horrible. Awful. Unspeakable, Powerful.

Intoxicating.

His hands gripping her head, her hair, he pushed himself into her, again and again, as if nothing else mattered. And nothing else did, not at that moment. He had never been closer to her, and yet he had never been further away. Her belly knotted tightly again - the belly protecting their child, his child - the child that he knew he'd never know. I know she'll speak kindly of me, he thought, not quite sure from where those strange words originated.

She was quickly caught in the unseemly grip of an orgasm, one that tore through her body and violated her soul. His respiration increased, sharing the sweet sound with her ear, and his body went into spasm, delivering his wet warmth deep into her body. She opened herself, spreading her legs slightly and bending herself into him. Tremors made it difficult to stand, as her own climax took control of her.

She came back to herself, to the heartbreaking, cold reality of her circumstances, when she felt his hands - one cold, metal, and artificial, the other warm, wet, and vital - wrapping around her hard stomach, as if to let her know he was protecting the fragile life beating within. She had failed her burden of strength, and she resigned by collapsing weakly to the ground.

Gently, with strong protective arms - and with his final human tears still flowing from his eyes - he caught her. He loved her. He saved her.

He condemned her.

No matter what else was to happen, she knew - truly knew now - that he loved her. He loved her more than anyone had ever had been loved before. He had risked everything for her, his life and his soul. Somehow, she knew that now. That was truly the greatest love of all, wasn't it? For a man to risk everything, to risk his immortal soul for what he loved, what he believed in? Others would not understand, but she would find solace and peace in this knowledge, the knowledge that he loved her, above anything else.

And no matter what else, she knew - knew in her own heart, and in her own breathing soul - that there was still, always had been, and always would be - great good in him.

Finally, she answered him.

Quietly, so quietly she whispered, into his ear for him alone to hear. So quietly that no one else in the universe could possibly hear, much less comprehend. So no one else could share in its naked intimacy.

So no one else could hold her to its promise.

In a voice that drew strength from solitude, she uttered one small word under her breath. A word for him, for him alone. A whispered word she would very soon come to regret.

"Forever."

~~~~ The End ~~~~

**My whole existence is flawed.  
You get me closer to God.  
-T. Reznor**

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